

U.S. Patent Application No.: 10/616,399
Amendment dated August 6, 2004
Reply to Office Action of May 7, 2003

PATENT

Attorney Docket No.: 713-23-CIP

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This paper is submitted in response to the office action mailed May 7, 2004.
Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-24 were filed. Claims 1-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over any of the following references: US 4,456,073 – Barth et al.; US 4,606,673 – Daniell; US 4,735,267 – Stevens; US 4,913,238 – Danazcko et al.; US 6,113,314 – Campbell; and US 6,712,560 – Cottrell. Claims 13-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over either Barth et al. or Danazcko et al.

In response to the office action, claim 13 has been amended and claim 22 has been canceled. As explained below, the rejection of claims 1-12 is respectfully traversed, and claims 13-21, 23, and 24, as amended, are respectfully submitted to overcome the rejection.

Claim 1 defines the following elements, in combination:

- (a) a buoyancy apparatus having an upper portion and a lower portion guided within the floating platform, the buoyancy apparatus having an upper surface;
- (b) a well deck provided on the upper surface of the buoyancy apparatus;
- (c) at least two vertical risers supported by the buoyancy apparatus and attached to the well deck and extending down through the buoyancy apparatus for connection to a seabed wellhead; and
- (d) at least one tendon assembly securing the buoyancy apparatus to the seabed, wherein the tendon assembly is attached to the well deck and extends along the vertical centerline of the buoyancy apparatus.

It is respectfully submitted that none of the references suggests the novel and non-obvious combination of elements and limitations defined in claim 1.

Specifically, Barth et al. does not relate to a floating platform. The Barth et al. platform lacks a buoyancy apparatus, and therefore it also lacks any of the other elements of claim 1, all of which are defined in terms of a structural and/or spatial relationship to a buoyancy apparatus.

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The Daniell reference lacks any teaching or suggestion of a tendon assembly attached to a well deck and extending along the centerline of the buoyancy apparatus. Likewise, the Danazcko et al. reference does not show or suggest a tendon assembly extending along the centerline of the buoyancy apparatus; the only structures extending through the buoyancy apparatus being the risers 32.

The platform described in Stevens lacks a well deck on the upper surface of the buoyancy apparatus (float means 15), and its risers 14, 14A do not extend through the buoyancy apparatus to a well deck. Nor does this reference disclose a tendon assembly extending along the centerline of the buoyancy apparatus.

The Campbell reference does not teach or suggest a well deck on the upper surface of a buoyancy apparatus, and it therefore necessarily does not teach or suggest a tendon assembly attached to a well deck. Furthermore, the tendon assembly in the Campbell apparatus does not extend along a vertical centerline of the buoyancy apparatus.

The Cottrell reference does not teach or suggest a well deck on the upper surface of the buoyancy apparatus, nor does it teach or suggest a tendon assembly attached to a well deck.

In view of Applicant's understanding of the cited references, as summarized above, it is not understood how any of them (or any combination of them) would teach or suggest the combination of features and elements defined in claim 1. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable over the cited references, taken singly or in any combination that might reasonably suggest itself to those skilled in the pertinent arts. Claims 2-12 depend from claim 1 and define with greater particularity the patentable features of the invention. Applicant therefore respectfully submits that claims 2-12 are likewise patentable over the art of record.

Claim 13 has been amended by adding the following limitation, formerly recited in (now canceled) claim 22:

"a central tendon assembly vertically restraining the buoyancy apparatus, the tendon assembly passing axially through the buoyancy apparatus and connected to the well deck and the seabed."

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It is respectfully submitted that claim 13, as amended, defines patentably over the cited references.

Specifically, as mentioned above, the Barth et al. reference does not relate to a floating platform, and it fails to teach or suggest a buoyancy apparatus. Lacking any teaching or suggestion of a buoyancy apparatus, the reference therefore necessarily lacks any suggestion of either a well deck on the upper surface of a buoyancy apparatus or a tendon assembly passing axially through a buoyancy apparatus. The Danazcko reference does not teach or suggest the use of a pressure reduction choke between the surface trees ("wellheads") 47 and the manifold 30, and it neither teaches nor suggests a central tendon assembly passing axially through the buoyancy apparatus and connecting the well deck to the seabed, as discussed above.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that claim 13, as amended, defines patentably over the cited references, taken singly or in any combination that might reasonably suggest itself to those skilled in the pertinent arts.

Claims 14-21, 23, and 24 depend from claim 13 and define, with greater particularity, the patentable features of the invention. It is therefore respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are allowable along with claim 13.

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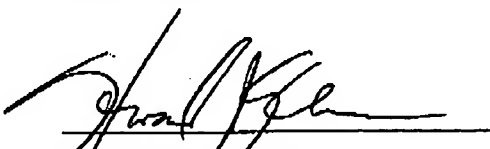
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In summary, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-21, 23, and 24, as amended, define patentably over the art of record. Allowance of these claims is respectfully requested, and passage of the application to issue is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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HOWARD J. KLEIN
Registration No. 28,727

Klein, O'Neill & Singh, LLP (Customer No.: 22145)
2 Park Plaza, Suite 510
Irvine CA 92614
Tel: (949) 955-1920
Fax: (949) 955 1921
E-mail: hjklein@koslaw.com

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